

Chapter X

Business Process Reengineering for the Use of Distance Learning at Bell Canada

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ABSTRACT

The Bell Online Institute (BOLI) represents a radical change to the way Bell Canada provides internal training to its 27,000 employees. BOLI specializes in Web-based training, one type of technology enabled (distance) learning. Web-based training is a significant departure from the more traditional classroom-based practices at the Bell Institute for Professional Development, which is the organization that oversees all employee training at Bell Canada. This case study examines the use of Web-based training at Bell Canada in the context of business process reengineering. We present a theoretical context and a practical guide to how technology enabled learning changes the business processes in an organization. The study defines the processes that are required to deliver Web-based training, the value to the internal and external business practices of the organization, and the costs for each process. The wider applications of this case study are identified and will be of interest to those in other

organizations that are moving from classroom delivered training to distance delivery. This case study describes changes in the organization that result from reengineering, including the impact Web-based learning has on training plans, student needs assessments, the ability to provide specialized curricula, training students and instructors in using new technologies, and establishing a principle of continuous improvement. Alternative ways of achieving project objectives are presented, along with organizational impact, technology alternatives, and cost-benefits.

BACKGROUND

The telecommunications industry in Canada has undergone dramatic changes within the past few years with deregulation, rapidly changing technologies, and the globalization of business practices. A downsizing effort at Bell Canada in response to the changing nature of the telephone industry has affected almost every area of the company, with the internal training function being no exception. The Bell Institute for Professional Development (BIPD) is the business unit that oversees all internal training activity at Bell Canada. BIPD has been re-invented over the past 3 years, and changes are still on-going. The first change occurred in 1995, when all training that had once been conducted in-house by BIPD was outsourced to 4 companies known as the “training partners.” BIPD’s role changed from that of training provider to strategic planner. The second change occurred in 1997, when a decision was made at the corporate level to increase the use of distance learning for training delivery to Bell Canada employees.

Methodology

In a work which predates the concept of business process reengineering, Jim Stewart (1991), sums up the role of training in achieving organizational change when he states that organizational change can happen only when individual change occurs through learning. While there are a great number of published methodologies for applying BPR concepts, one model that emphasizes organizational transformation is the “6 R’s” of business process reengineering by Johnson A. Edosomwan in *Organizational Transformation and Process Reengineering* (St. Lucie Press, 1996).

Edosomwan’s 6-R’s methodology draws upon previous well-known works on business process reengineering. Michael Hammer, the originator of the business process reengineering concept emphasizes the need for complete redesign of the organization to accomplish reengineering objectives. In *Reengineering the Corporation* (Hammer and Champy, 1993), identify innovation, speed, customer service, and quality as key success factors in the process. Other authors have also applied the original concepts of business process reengineering to specific situations such as training. In *Reengineering the Training Function* (1996), Donald Shandler describes preparation, process identification, vision development, solution formulation, and transformation as major reengineering elements and clearly shows how they apply to corporate training.

The advantage of the 6-R’s approach is that the methodology is concise, yet well-defined.

The following is a summary of the 6-R’s methodology:

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